

A HOUSING FIRST APPROACH FOR ENCAMPMENTS: Findings Report from Dufferin Grove Park

Executive Summary

The following report provides details of and findings from a multi-sectoral initiative implemented in Dufferin Grove Park between August 11 and December 23, 2021. Built on the Housing First practices of Streets to Homes, the model implemented in Dufferin Grove was enhanced through collaboration with community partners at the advisory and operational level. The initiative brought comprehensive social and health service supports directly to the park to reduce service barriers and promote client self-determination. A person-centered approach enabled trust and relationship building which was key to improved outcomes for those staying in the encampment. In addition to connecting individuals to a range of health and social supports, the initiative successfully supported 90 individuals to transition into safer indoor spaces. Key learnings from this initiative will be critical to informing the City's ongoing response to larger scale encampments and to successfully meeting the needs of individuals living within them, as well as the surrounding community.

The implementation of this multi-pronged approach resulted in 7 key learnings:

1. Housing uptake increases when access to permanent housing options are expanded, streamlined, and based on an individual's needs and preferences. Given limited housing availability, more resources are required to be able to effectively scale this approach.
2. Trust, rapport, and relationship building between individuals in the park and service providers was critical to the success of the initiative, as was dedicated staffing resources onsite.
3. Deployment of intensive multi-disciplinary staffing resources onsite ensured connections to housing workers and other supports that best met people's needs.
4. Continuous and transparent engagement with all stakeholders was key to the success of the approach.
5. The encampment was used as social and community building space in addition to a place to sleep. Increasing other uses of the park by removing non-sleeping tents was therefore possible without reducing shelter options in the park.
6. A synchronous maintenance strategy mitigated the growth of the encampment and enhanced the feasibility of other uses of the park.
7. Measuring outcomes and increasing mechanisms for meaningfully engaging people living outdoors is important to shaping and evaluating impacts of a successful response.

1. Background

Exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, encampments increased noticeably in 2020 throughout the City of Toronto. Populated by individuals experiencing homelessness and other systemic vulnerabilities, encampments gave rise to safety and well-being concerns for the individuals staying in encampments and local communities. Visible outdoor homelessness and the scale of encampments have increased during the pandemic as a result of several factors, including:

- a shortage of appropriate affordable and supportive housing options;
- people moving from ravines and more remote locations into more visible areas;
- fewer options for people to stay with friends, family or other temporary accommodations due to the pandemic;
- fears related to exposure to COVID-19 in the shelter system;
- an increase in the number of people discharged from provincial correctional facilities who did not have housing to return to;
- limited and reduced access to other provincial programs and services as a result of capacity reductions (e.g. detox, substance use treatment programs, mental health crisis/safe beds);
- growing poverty and inadequate rent supports for those experiencing low-income.

While the issue of outdoor homelessness is not new, the City has adapted its response to the current context and scale of encampments. On June 8, 2021, City Council directed staff to work with individuals in encampments to develop individual and culturally appropriate housing plans on an accelerated basis regardless of whether the individual accepts a placement in an indoor space. This is consistent with the City's existing Housing First approach that Streets to Homes has operated under since 2005. In 2020, Streets to Homes assisted more than 300 people to move into housing directly from unsheltered homelessness.

In light of this renewed direction, which emphasized the importance of the Housing First approach, and the public criticism regarding the encampment clearings in June and July 2021, a new multi-pronged approach was developed. Cornerstones of this approach were taking the necessary time to build trust with encamped individuals and expediting access to housing and other supports, without the use of enforcement. Dufferin Grove Park was identified as a priority site for this approach due to the encampment's scale in August 2021, its rapid growth, its proximity to community supports, and opportunities for relationship building between local residents and the City.

Additionally, by the end of summer 2021, the City had received numerous messages from residents of the Dufferin Grove area regarding the scale of the encampment and perceived impact on the use of park amenities. Staff who were visiting Dufferin Grove at the time reported that the number of individuals staying onsite were consistently lower than actual structures observed there. These factors, in combination with the local City Councillor's support, made the Dufferin Grove Park encampment an appropriate location to implement the multi-pronged initiative.

1.1 Dufferin Grove Park Context

Dufferin Grove Park, near the intersection of Dufferin Avenue and Bloor Street West, is a 5.3 hectare park which is actively used by the local community and a variety of organizations,

including local primary and high schools. The park includes a sports field, basketball court, wading pool, children’s playground, two fire pits, community garden, and a community bake oven.

At the beginning of August 2021, 22 tents were erected in Dufferin Grove. Tents were located throughout the park with City staff identifying approximately 15 individuals staying on site. The people living in the park reflected an array of populations including youth, adults, and Black- and Indigenous-identified individuals. In early August, there was also an Indigenous sacred fire established to honour the children whose unmarked graves had been recovered at residential schools.

Through ongoing engagement with City staff, the Dufferin Grove community expressed tremendous support to assist these individuals to access housing. Simultaneously, there was feedback shared that the City could improve how it ensured park amenities remained available and for shared use by all. Ahead of school reopening in September, City staff also opened lines of communication with the administrators at St Mary’s Catholic Academy and Westside Montessori School, which flank the park to the north and south respectively. Both schools expressed an eagerness to continue their use of the park for outdoor education and recreation for their students.

1.2 Housing First

The collaborative model for Dufferin Grove builds on the City’s overall response to homelessness that is grounded in a Housing First approach. Housing First focuses on helping people to find permanent housing as quickly as possible, with the supports they need to live as independently as possible, without any preconditions such as accepting treatment or abstinence. The underlying philosophy of Housing First is that people are more successful in moving forward with their lives if they first have housing. The Housing First approach includes providing individualized, person-centred supports that are strengths-based, trauma informed, grounded in a harm reduction philosophy and promote self-sufficiency. The five principles of Housing First in Toronto are outlined below:



2. Housing First in Dufferin Grove

Beginning on August 11 and concluding on December 23, 2021, in collaboration with community partners, the City implemented an enhanced Housing First model to engage, support, and house

individuals living within the Dufferin Grove encampment. A coordinated, solution-focused working group made up of local health providers, community service agencies, City of Toronto stakeholders and the local Councillor's office informed its implementation. By prioritizing trusting relationships between staff and clients, and by attending to diverse and complex unmet needs through the mobile provision of supports, this approach enabled the overwhelming majority of individuals in the encampment to transition to permanent housing and/or safer indoor spaces without the use of enforcement.

The objectives of the Dufferin Grove model were:

1. To increase engagement in housing plans by building trust and rapport between individuals in encampments and service providers;
2. To meet the immediate needs of individuals living in the park through the mobile provision of health and social supports;
3. To connect individuals living in the park to safer indoor spaces including permanent housing that met their needs;
4. To localize encampment-response strategies for greater impact.

2.1 Key Components of the Model

Housing First approaches were adapted to the encampment context in a number of ways:

1. Collaborative and integrated approaches
 - a. A working group was established to streamline implementation and service coordination;
 - b. An onsite Information & Help Centre was established to provide just-in-time access to supports;
 - c. Weekly case conference meetings occurred to align services from the City and partners;
2. Comprehensive and innovative support offerings
 - a. Physical and mental health care provision was offered onsite, with warm transfer available to other levels of care;
 - b. Mobile offering of social services onsite reduced barriers to services including housing;
 - c. Permanent and supportive housing options were dedicated for use in the initiative to meet individual criteria, and;
 - d. A synchronous maintenance and sanitation strategy reduced the overall footprint and impact of the encampment on other uses of the park.

2.1.1 Collaborative & Integrated Approaches

Working Group

The Dufferin Grove Encampment Working Group (the Working Group) builds on City of Toronto practices of engaging community stakeholders on initiatives that impact equity-deserving populations. Chaired by the City of Toronto's Director of Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services (SSHA), the Working Group drew on the expertise of leaders from health, housing, community agencies, and local residents as well as staff from relevant City divisions.

Members informed the iterative development of the model and many also provided services to those staying in the park. The membership included local city councillor, Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, who represented the interest of other local residents and who provided strategic insights for advancing the goals of the initiative overall. The Working Group met weekly between August and December 2021, until all those staying in the encampment had received appropriate supports. (See Appendix A for full list of Working Group members.)

Onsite Information & Help Centre

A central component of the approach in Dufferin Grove was the development of an Information & Help Centre. Located in the park and open 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, a consistent, on-the-ground presence facilitated relationship building with individuals staying in the park as well as their advocates and other stakeholders. The daily presence of the Project Coordinator at the Information & Help Centre, along with a consortium of outreach partners, enabled just-in-time access to supports.

The Information & Help Centre also served as a public education resource. Neighbours of the park and other community members regularly approached staff with questions about the initiative, about sharing park amenities with those in encampments, and with their concerns for individuals staying in the park.

Weekly Case Conferences

Case conference meetings between the City and partner agencies operating in the park enabled aligned and responsive supports at an individual and encampment level. Held weekly, these meetings provided an opportunity to share information about those still seeking supports in the park and promoted a no-wrong-door approach. At the conclusion of the initiative in December, 20 weekly case conference meetings had occurred.

2.1.2 Comprehensive & Innovative Support Offerings

Health Services

Nurses, psychiatrists, and family doctors from Inner City Health Associates (ICHA) Street Clinical Outreach for Unsheltered Torontonians (SCOUT) team, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre's (PQWCHC) harm reduction street outreach team, and the Multi-disciplinary Outreach team (M-DOT) were mobilized to provide health and mental health services in the park. They regularly assessed and treated skin and soft tissue infections, cold and wet weather injuries, mental health, addictions, sexual health, and other chronic health conditions. They assisted individuals with navigating tertiary care (such as accessing hospitals, sexual health clinics, and specialists), attending medical appointments and accessing medication. In addition to pop-up clinics offered regularly in the park, healthcare supports were accessible by text and calls directly from both clients and outreach workers. Follow up health supports remained available to individuals even once they had transitioned into shelter or housing.

Social Services

Pivotal to the implementation of a Housing First approach in the Dufferin Grove setting was the identification of unmet needs which could be addressed by bringing supports directly to the encampment. This strategy has been, in some form, an ongoing part of the encampment response during the pandemic. Informed in part by a March 2021 survey of encamped individuals, additional supports were brought to Dufferin Grove as specific needs were identified by individuals at that site. Over 562 outreach visits were conducted by all service partners. Outreach supports included:

- Individualized and culturally appropriate housing plans provided by Streets to Homes and partner agencies Albion Neighbourhood Services and Na-Mes-Res (Native Men's Residence);
- Income access promoted by a Toronto Employment & Social Services team that was established to provide outreach in encampments;
- Tax clinics provided by volunteers at Parkdale Intercultural Association to promote eligibility for Rapid Housing Initiative units;
- Identification documentation clinics provided by The Neighbourhood Group to enable eligibility for housing units;
- Financial support for returning to homes in communities outside of Toronto provided by Streets to Homes;
- Youth homelessness supports provided by the YMCA of Greater Toronto;
- Weekly meals provided through a partnership between Streets to Homes and Project Good Karma to address food insecurity;
- Fire safety education provided by Toronto Fire Services' Community Risk Reduction Unit to minimize fire risks, and;
- Clean Up Days hosted by Park, Forestry & Recreation and Solid Waste Management Services to improve sanitation in the park.

Individualized Housing Supports

Housing and outreach workers from Streets to Homes and partner agencies facilitated housing access by taking a client-centred approach to outreach. The time needed to build trust and rapport with the individuals in the park was prioritized. This was critical to increasing psychological safety for individuals and facilitating appropriate connections to both social and housing supports.

The provision of choice in housing options – as well as in shelter hotels and respite sites – was also a priority. Once individuals identified their interest in moving indoors, they were provided an overview of available housing options. These were based on the criteria identified by the individual them self, including age and preferred geographic location. Some individuals living in the park were offered viewings at multiple units which met their criteria before signing a lease. Staff also connected individuals to income and identification procurement supports to ensure a successful tenancy. Access to housing was not conditional on the acceptance of services, supports, or other housing readiness requirements.

Streets to Homes provided newly housed individuals with a *welcome home* package to ease the transition from living outdoors. Individuals were also assisted with moving and obtaining furniture for their units through a partnership with Toronto Furniture Bank. Per their standard approach, Streets to Homes and partner agencies will follow up with housed individuals for a minimum of 12 months to support integration into the community, housing stabilization and a successful tenancy.

Dedicated Housing and Support Resources

Expedited access to permanent housing for those staying in Dufferin Grove was facilitated by the targeted allocation of a limited number of permanent and supportive housing options from the City's existing pool of resources. This was enabled by a collaboration between Streets to Homes and SSHA's Coordinated Access team. Encamped individuals were matched to and provided referrals for units through Prioritized Access to Housing and Supports (PATHS), the Rapid Rehousing Initiative, or the Commercial Rent supplement Program. These partnerships enabled the reduction of process barriers to successful housing. Further, they enabled coordinated

tracking of referrals across various housing providers by both teams. Applications for the Centralized Waiting List were also expedited through processing where applicable.

To ensure housing options met each individual's unique needs and preferences, a range of housing resources were identified and made available to support the initiative in Dufferin Grove. These 5 options included: Rapid Rehousing Initiative units, City-funded supportive housing units, and units managed by alternative social housing providers. Commercial Rent Supplements units and housing allowances were also available with varied levels of support attached. The 3 type of permanent housing units that were ultimately accessed by individuals in the park were Rapid Rehousing Initiative units, City-funded supportive housing units, or Commercial Rent Supplement units provided by alternative social housing providers. Expedited and streamlined access to permanent housing was key to the success of the initiative and was made feasible by the mobilization efforts of those on the Working Group.

Synchronous Approach to Maintenance & Sanitation

Due to the availability of onsite supports within the park, the encampment grew rapidly from 15 to 24 individuals and more to than 40 tents onsite soon after implementation. Beginning on October 12, 2021, as the City continued to support individuals already staying in the park with access to housing and supports, security and by-law officers were deployed to dissuade the establishment of new encampments. When an individual attempted to establish a new encampment, they were asked to remove their encampment (tent or structure) and were referred to a housing and outreach worker for assessment and referral. Between October 12 and December 23, 2021, 10 new encampments were attended to by security and by-law officers. Additionally, one *Trespass to Property* notice was issued to an encamped individual due to behaviour that negatively impacted staff's ability to engage with other encamped individuals seeking housing supports.

The City took steps to enhance sanitation measures in Dufferin Grove Park. Two portable toilets were installed in the park and extended hours were implemented at the City's washroom building. These facilities were cleaned twice daily and garbage and debris removal was also increased for the park, as with other sites identified as having active encampments. In partnership with Parks, Forestry, and Recreation, Solid Waste Management conducted daily garbage removal from Dufferin Grove. Parks Ambassadors and the Parks Clean Up Crew team were in the park daily to conduct wellness checks, support sanitation efforts, and overall park maintenance.

3. Outcomes & Key Accomplishments

3.1 Housing Outcomes¹

All individuals encountered by staff in the Dufferin Grove encampment were offered safer indoor space. In total, **90** individuals had successful outcomes such as referrals to shelter hotel programs, transition to permanent housing or family reunification. A total of **101** encampments (tents or structures) were removed as individuals left the park. Between August and December, 2021, the model resulted in the following impacts:

Permanent Housing

25 individuals transitioned into permanent housing after staying in the encampment. 10 individuals were housed directly from the park, while 15 individuals first transitioned into shelter hotel programs.

¹ All data in this report is as of January 20, 2022.

Shelter Hotel

78 individuals accepted referrals and transitioned into shelter hotel programs during the initiative. 47 individuals continue to utilize shelter programs. 15 individuals are now residing in permanent housing, as indicated above. Records show that 15 individuals "decided to leave" or "failed to return" to the shelter program they had entered following their stay in the encampment. 1 individual was transitioned to the care of the health system.

Reunification

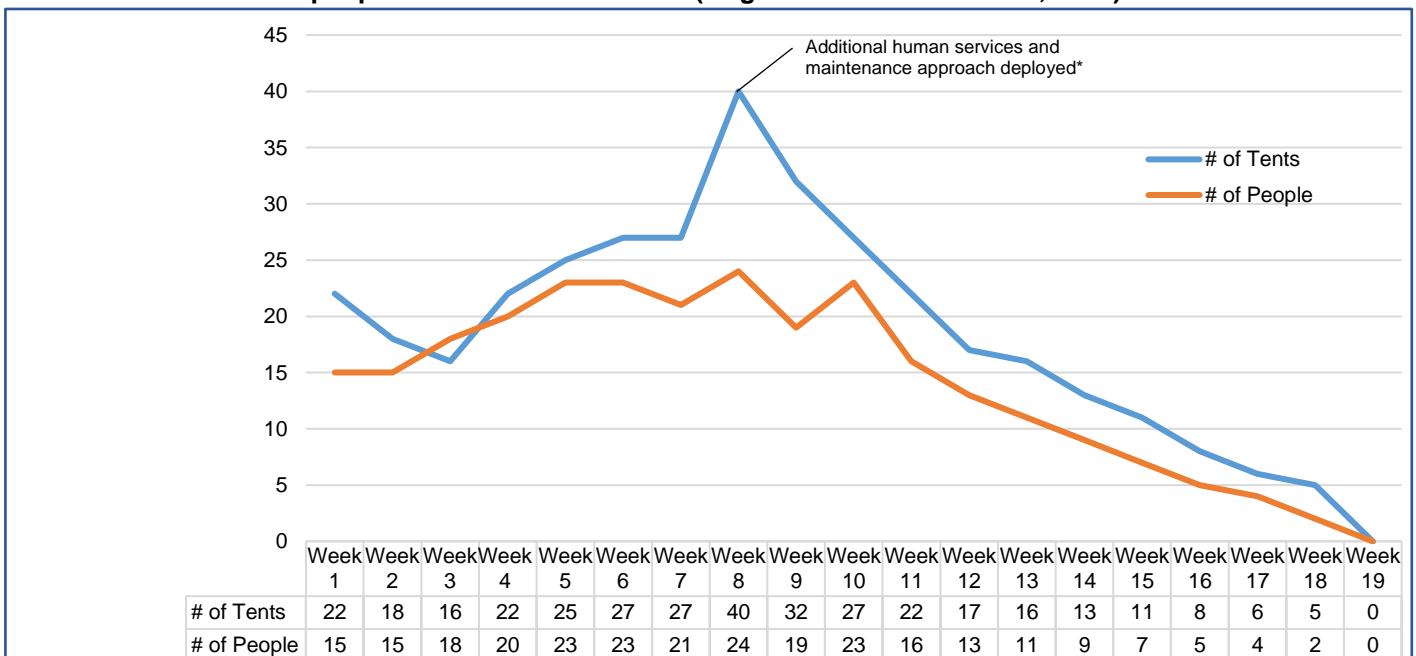
Outreach staff in Dufferin Grove supported 1 individual to successfully reunify with their family and thus transition back home. Another 1 individual was provided with financial support to return home to their community outside of Toronto.

3.1.1 Housing Success Story

It has been 15 years since Jessica had a place of her own. Loss of employment, relationship breakdown, depression, and other challenges...a vicious cycle that many of Streets to Homes clients can sadly relate to. "So where do I go from here?" she asked herself every day. Being a female on the streets, feeling vulnerable and scared, Jessica hoped that her tent would provide a safe temporary shelter. Only to repeatedly find out that all her belongings had been taken and someone else was occupying the one tiny space she hoped to feel safe.

"There are support groups that come to check on people like myself, who are staying in the encampments. But never have I thought that they can actually provide me with an apartment of my own, and in such a short time". Jessica now confesses to her housing worker that even after the unit viewing in her preferred neighbourhood, she was still unconvinced that it would really happen. "It was like you came out of nowhere and the next day I truly had a place", she shares. Jessica feels that her new home is great and wonderful. Her housing worker connected her to supports in the neighbourhood specific to her needs. She since returned to the park few times to motivate others who are now on the way to be housed.

Table 1. Tents and people in Dufferin Grove Park (August 11 to December 23, 2021)



*Additional Human Services and Maintenance Approach includes Municipal Licencing and Standards, Corporate Security, and increased community partner presence onsite

3.2 Health and Social Service Outcomes

There were significant positive outcomes that resulted from the combined **562** outreach visits conducted by health and social service providers directly to the Dufferin Grove encampment. These onsite offerings reduced barriers to service access and enabled greater social and economic outcomes for participants as they engaged in housing plans. These included:

Healthcare

Intensive clinical health support was provided by Inner City Health Associates (ICHA) to at least **21** unique individuals within the park. Staff indicate that the number of engagements with individuals were much higher than recorded. Due to the low-barrier nature of the health services provided, not all one-off support was captured. These engagements included overdose response, naloxone training, harm reduction, wound care, and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy counseling. ICHA continues to follow-up and work with approximately half of the clients engaged at Dufferin Grove who have since transitioned to shelter or permanent housing

Social Services & Other Supports

To facilitate eligibility for and access to housing, **15** individuals were connected to income supports through Toronto Employment & Social Services and **21** individuals filed tax returns. Additionally **32** individuals received identification documents through the onsite identification clinic provided by The Neighbourhood Group.

To address the food insecurity of encamped individuals over **375** meals were provided weekly over 15 weeks. Through a partnership between Streets to Homes and Project Good Karma, no-cost weekly meals were provided which consisted of a sandwich, piece of fruit, energy bar, and juice.

Fire safety education was provided by Toronto Fire Services' Community Risk Reduction Unit over the course of 17 visits, engaging directly with individuals in the encampment **112** times. Teams from Toronto Fire further reduced fire risk to campers and the community by intervening on unsafe fire practices including 3 incidences of open air burning and the removal of 2 gasoline cans.

4. Key Learnings

The implementation of this multi-pronged approach in Dufferin Grove has resulted in 7 key learnings. These learnings will be critical to informing the City's ongoing response to larger scale encampments and successfully meeting the needs of individuals living within them, as well as the surrounding community.

1. Housing uptake increases when access to permanent housing options are expanded, streamlined, and based on an individual's needs and preferences. Given limited housing availability, more resources are required to be able to effectively scale this approach.
 - o Individuals living in the park were more receptive to connecting with housing and outreach workers when choice around permanent housing was offered to them. The availability of a range of unit options also increased success in the uptake of housing and centered clients' voices in the process. Staff from Streets to Homes and partner agencies also reported an increase in staff morale as a result of being

- able to more readily offer individuals permanent housing rather than temporary indoor space.
- A targeted use of existing housing resources for those staying in the Dufferin Grove encampment was implemented. Due to the scarcity of affordable and supportive housing resources overall, this had the potential of limiting options for those experiencing homelessness elsewhere in the system. Further, some of the dedicated units were held as options for those in the park for an extended period of time. Identifying an appropriate length of time to hold dedicated units could promote more equitable access to those elsewhere in the system.
 - Staff also identified barriers to leveraging housing allowances, noting that the available amount is insufficient in light of market realities. In order to successfully implement this approach to other large scale encampments, a continued and strengthened injection of affordable housing into the Toronto market, including advocacy to other orders of government for their support on this aim, is imperative to reducing homelessness and the scale of encampments.
2. Trust, rapport, and relationship building between individuals in the park and service providers was critical to the success of the initiative, as was dedicated staffing resources onsite.
- This multi-pronged approach centred the importance of trust and relationship building within a Housing First and person-centered framework. Building trust between service providers and those in the park proved critical for transitioning individuals to housing options that met their criteria. Some of the individuals living in Dufferin Grove set up tents there after previously being removed from other encampments. For these individuals, rapport and relationship building took longer as workers needed to repair the resulting impacts, trauma, and distrust of service providers. A necessary step, this relationship building period nonetheless increased the length of stays in the encampment.
 - Consistent onsite engagement was critical to relationship building with those staying in the park. The establishment of an onsite Information & Help Centre assisted with streamlining connections to services. The predictable presence of a project coordinator (onsite 5 days a week/7 hours a day) enabled timely communication with stakeholders and the responsive mobilization of a suite of services in the park. A weekly schedule was also posted indicating the mobile services and supports available at the park throughout the week.
 - Conventionally high caseload sizes of City of Toronto outreach staff pose difficulties for staff in building connections with individual clients. The Dufferin Grove encampment enjoyed a dedicated team throughout this initiative who, as a result, could focus their energies on just those in that encampment. Greater outreach staff resources overall would assist with mitigating this issue, and would further promote the successful outcomes for those in encampments in other areas of the City.
3. Deployment of intensive multi-disciplinary staffing resources onsite ensured connections to housing workers and other supports that best met people's needs.
- The concentrated implementation of mobile services in the park was essential to meeting the immediate needs of those within the encampment. Clients who identified gaps were connected to income and ID supports, tax clinics, meals, mental and physical healthcare, harm reduction services, fire safety education and hoarding support. These onsite supports reduced barriers to services that often

- stand in the way of positive health and social outcomes for individuals staying in encampments.
- The injection of intensive resources came with a concentration of staff that enabled the creation of multi-disciplinary teams consisting of workers from housing, youth services, health care, mental health & addictions, Indigenous services, mobile ID and income supports. The creation of these multi-disciplinary teams promoted a no-wrong-door approach, reduced the need for cumbersome referral processes, and resulted in aligned engagement and support strategies. The concentration of mobile services ultimately promoted timelier and more effective connection to much-needed supports across a number of categories.
4. Continuous and transparent engagement with all stakeholders was key to the success of the approach.
- By drawing on the expertise of the Working Group, the initiative benefited from a diversity of lenses including housing, health, social services, and local governance. Through these relationships, community and agency resources were strategically leveraged towards the aims of the initiative.
 - Engagement with local residents, the broader Dufferin Grove community, and advocates allowed the City an opportunity to inform stakeholders on progress as it was made. It also created a forum to receive suggestions, address misinformation, and get feedback on the initiative. The initiative would have benefited from formal processes for gathering input from people encamped in the park. Opportunities to further engage with people living outdoors will be considered as the model continues to evolve
 - An unintended consequence of the availability of frontline staff to stakeholders has been targeted harassment both in-person and online. Communication with stakeholders should be enabled and tracked in such a way that continues to promote open discussion while assuring staff safety.
 - City staff and partners were regularly approached in the park by neighbours and other stakeholders seeking information about encampments in general and the response in Dufferin Grove. This suggests that a proactive public education and community development strategy would be beneficial and could reduce the burden on service providers as they conduct their core work.
5. The encampment was used as social and community building space in addition to a place to sleep. Increasing other uses of the park by removing non-sleeping tents was therefore possible without reducing shelter options in the park.
- Some tents in the encampment were established for the purpose of storage or socializing rather than sleeping. Efforts were therefore made to reduce the overall footprint of the encampment and increase access to the park for other users, without disrupting people's access to their shelter. An honorarium was also introduced to better enable those in encampments to voluntarily reduce their footprints once an indoor space was accepted. Based on the success at Dufferin Grove, the use of honouraria is being explored for broader implementation.
 - Some individuals in the encampment were already in a program (shelter, hotel, respite) or had permanent housing. Pop-up day programming in parks has been explored in other jurisdictions to support community building and reduce risks of anti-social behaviours in public areas where encampments may be established.
 - Staff recognized the importance of social bonds developed in the encampment when providing housing options. Efforts were repeatedly made to offer housing

units and spaces that enabled community members to stay in close proximity to each other once transitioned out of the encampment.

6. A synchronous maintenance strategy mitigated the growth of the encampment and enhanced the feasibility of other uses of the park.
 - The early success of this model resulted in a rapid increase in the number of encampments in Dufferin Grove. An initiative was taken to mitigate continued increases in the number of tents in order to maintain broader access to park amenities while staff continued to support those already encamped. Private security was procured to intervene immediately on the establishment of new encampments. The individuals encountered by private security were connected to housing supports. By implementing this maintenance strategy, it reduced the potential for reliance on large scale enforcements of park by-law and improved outcomes for those encamped
7. Measuring outcomes and increasing mechanisms for meaningfully engaging people living outdoors is important to shaping and evaluating impacts of a successful response.
 - Staff and partners gathered important qualitative insights into the experiences and needs of those staying in the encampment through interactions with clients. Inputs and outcomes were also closely monitored. Data was used to both iterate the model during case management and working group meetings as well as build support for innovations amongst stakeholders. The data revealed questions about how outreach is conducted and the manner in which other dimensions of the housing system can be navigated to ensure equitable prioritization for housing and service access.
 - Staff identified that current data collection tools are not adapted for optimal use in encampments. A strengthened data strategy for future implementation of this model would support evidence-responsive services, indicators that drive equitable outcomes, and streamlined data collection and management approaches overall.

5. Conclusion

A collaborative Housing First approach for encampments has proven to be effective for relationship building, increasing engagement with housing plans, and ultimately for the uptake of permanent housing amongst those staying in Dufferin Grove Park. Between August 11 and December 23, 2021, multi-disciplinary teams successfully supported 25 individuals to transition to permanent housing. Of the 78 individuals successfully referred to shelter hotel spaces, many positive outcomes have been reported including 15 transitions to permanent housing and 47 remaining in shelter hotel programs. Outcomes from this enhanced approach suggest a viable path forward for the City of Toronto's encampment response protocol.

Staff have described the increased and expedited access to permanent housing units as the most significant contributor to the improved housing outcomes for those in the encampment. This included some individuals who had been established in other encampments and had shown persistent preference for remaining in encampments despite previous referrals to shelter hotels. Individuals for whom chronicity was a factor for other reasons showed improved outcomes as a result of the significant focus on relationship building from staff. Strong relationships and renewed trust in staff set the foundation for clients to identify needs and have them met. A collaborative approach at the operational and advisory level meant that attending to needs that arose occurred in a timely and responsive fashion. Multi-disciplinary teams provided access to a wide range of

health and social supports that improved the immediate and long term outcomes for clients at their own pace and through a no-wrong-door approach.

Needs of other stakeholders were also addressed in a collaborative and innovative fashion. With several channels for engagement and feedback available, the City and partners were able to address concerns as they arose. Neighbours had regular access to information about the progress on the initiative to transition people to safer indoor spaces and expectations for other uses of the park. The modified approach to maintaining broader access to the park was successful in striking a balance between the needs of the many users of parklands.

The Housing First principles that have guided the work of Streets to Homes since 2005 provided a strong foundation for the initiative. The added enhancements of a working group, concentrated and integrated health and social supports offered onsite, dedicated permanent housing units, and a synchronous maintenance strategy enabled greater responsiveness to the needs that have arisen out of the encampment context. By centering client choice and self-determination, and ensuring time during implementation to achieve this meaningfully, necessary trust was established with individuals and the uptake of housing offers increased. Streets to Homes and partner agencies will continue to follow up with housed individuals for a minimum of 12 months to support housing stabilization, a successful tenancy, and to monitor the long term success of this initiative. Furthermore, this approach advances a number of City strategies including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan, and SafeTO: A Community Safety & Wellbeing Plan. The model described here has significant implications for the future of the City of Toronto's approach to encampment response and the reshaping of key City policy on the issue.

APPENDIX A: Project Contributors

Partner	Role
Albion Neighbourhood Services	Housing Outreach
City Manager's Office (City of Toronto)	Working Group
Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão (Davenport)	Working Group
Corporate Security (City of Toronto)	Security
Housing Secretariat (City of Toronto)	Working Group
Dixon Hall	Working Group, Hoarding Specialists, Community Engagement
Inner City Health Associates	Working Group, Health Services
Multi-Disciplinary Outreach Team	Mental Health, Housing Outreach
Na-Mes-Res (Native Men's Residence)	Housing Outreach
Office of Emergency Management (City of Toronto)	Project Coordination
Parkdale International Association	Tax Clinic
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre	Working Group
Parks, Forestry, & Recreation (City of Toronto)	Parks Ambassadors, Maintenance, Cleaning
Project Good Karma	Meal Program
Shelter, Support & Housing Administration (City of Toronto)	Project Coordination, Housing Outreach, Housing Counselling
Social Development, Finance, and Administration (City of Toronto)	Working Group
The Neighbourhood Group	Identification Document Clinics
Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness	Working Group
Toronto Employment & Social Services (City of Toronto)	Income Support
Toronto Fire Services (City of Toronto)	Fire Education Outreach, Fire Safety Assessments and Amelioration

Toronto Paramedic Services	Health Services
Toronto Public Health (City of Toronto)	Vaccine Clinic
University Health Network	Working Group
YMCA of Greater Toronto	Youth Homelessness and Housing Outreach